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Elite Deviance and the Rising Rate of Conflicts Among Politicians in South-South Nigeria

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Abstract:

This paper has carefully examined elite deviance and the rising rate of conflicts among politicians in the South-South region. The work basically focused exploring how elite deviance, which is basically actions carried out by public officials with the central goal of experiencing personal or class gain in profits or power in relation to the masses, has negatively rubbed off on the state of development in the South-South. The objectives of the paper roved around evaluating the state of elite-deviance, its causative factors, prevalence amongst politicians, and how it leads to conflicts amongst politicians and incidentally to underdevelopment in the South-South of Nigeria. This paper applied the Elite theory considering the fact that in every society it is often a minority of the population (the elite) which takes the major decisions in the society. It is this advantageous position that gives the politicians the opportunity to engage in elite deviance to the clash of interests that often results in conflicts that affect the state of development in this region. This paper found that there is the prevalence of the politics of godfatherism, prebendalism and clientelism, all of which make elite-deviance to flourish in the South-South. Besides, the political elite have not appreciably been contributing to development in South-South; and elite deviance results in overall underdevelopment and suffering of the people of the South-South.

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Also, Federal Government efforts towards development often get thwarted by elite-deviance that is the main impeding factor of development, which can only be achieved through honest and dedicated efforts of all stakeholders in the region. Consequently, this work recommended honest, dedicated and

goals-oriented political leadership based on proper constitutionality; checkmating and playing down on conflicts, all-inclusive governance, punishing fraudulent politicians in the region to deter others, and proper accountability for the overall development of the South-South.

Introduction

Knowledge is often enhanced when terms are clearly defined before commencement of scholarly exploits on them. Simon (1999) says that elite deviance is when powerful people or the organisations they run do things that hurt people physically, financially, or morally. These actions include controlling the economy, the government, and basic human rights in order to make money for themselves or their organisations. Elite deviance is a form of criminal behaviour carried out by a relatively small group of influential individuals with disproportionately large amounts of influence.

It is today common knowledge that there is a high tendency of conflict amongst politicians in the South-South, which has been blamed on myriad forces, including greed, economic exploitation, resource appropriation and distribution disputes, appointment issues, corruption, electioneering processes based on the politics of prebendalism and clientelism, socio-political marginalization, use of cults to carry out nefarious acts, and weapons proliferation. Although each of these problems is significant, none of them compares to the deliberate roles played by high-level social, economic, and political interests in the activation of violence based on elite deviance as a means to secure economic advantage from the accruals to the South-South. While each of these problems is significant, none of them compares to the deliberate roles played by high-level social, economic, and political interests (Okonofua, 2013). Any effort to comprehend the tragedy of elite deviance in connection to its effects on development and detrimental impact on democracy in the South-South of Nigeria must address the issue of political corruption and spectacular waste of precious resources by the power elite in this area.

Nigeria as a nation, and more especially the South-South geopolitical zone, is in a precarious position since its independence owing to the high level of elite deviance and political corruption. This area suffers a grave crisis in its economic, social, and political growth, which is not unrelated to the issue of pervasive political corruption that influences the manner in which public officials are elected via rigged elections. The symptoms of the increasing number of political disputes in the South-South are evident, although the solutions are less so. Therefore, for a geopolitical zone like Nigeria, which is a nation emerging from lengthy years of military dictatorship, pervasive political corruption and enormous waste provide formidable obstacles.

Abah (2010, p.5) explains that, “Ideally, the political elite are supposed to ensure that they administer their people towards the achievement of overall development of their communities and people.” Séverine and Shahani (2009) posit that, “When an institution becomes useless to man or a given people, it raises the question of the need for its perpetuation”. The fact that development has been observed to be on the decline in the South-South while the political elite are engaging in deviance and enjoying the perks of their exalted statuses calls for an up close research, which is the essence of this paper. Development indices like electricity, pipe-borne water, qualitative education, feeder roads, health facilities etc are either lacking or inadequately provided in the South-South by the political elite irrespective of the high political positions some of them have occupied in politics at all tiers of government in Nigeria. They are given more to gravitating to themselves greedily all that they can grab from the offices they occupy, which creates the room for an upsurge of conflicts amongst them.

Nevertheless, since 1999, when the nation reverted to civil rule, there is little question that elite deviation has been the scourge of democratic stability and survival, since local government elections are often manipulated, just as elections for higher levels of government. Corruption-related news is no longer shocking. This confirms Transparency International's (TI) constant ranking of Nigeria as one of the world's most corrupt countries (Ogundiya, 2009). All anti-corruption initiatives used by succeeding administrations have had little results. All of these facts occur to the detriment and persistent underdevelopment of the South-South, while the governing political class exult and flaunt their ill-gotten money.

The South-South region of Nigeria has been devastated by the pathological effects of political corruption, including democratic instability, a low level of governmental legitimacy, voracious poverty, infrastructure decay, electoral crisis, contract killing, political assassination, insecurity, and generally, developmental problems. Those who profess to provide the best solutions, the political class, have been revealed as the perpetrators. This fact motivates and reminds me of the necessity for this study. This research seeks to investigate elite deviance and the increasing prevalence of political disputes in South-South Nigeria. The specific objectives are as follows:

1. To find out the causative factors of the high spate of elite deviance amongst politicians in South-South of Nigeria.
2. Determine how elite deviance leads to conflicts amongst politicians in the South-South of Nigeria.
3. Find out how elite deviance has prompted conflicts amongst politicians that have affected the overall development of the South-South of Nigeria.

Literature Review

Elite Deviance

Some scholars have used the terms "crimes of the powerful" (Quinney, 1978) and "elite deviance" (Simon and Eitzen, 1993) and used conflict as a theoretical framework to guide their research. These experts know that the term "white-collar crime" is no longer useful. Conflict theory is a sociological paradigm that says society is always in conflict between a small group of powerful people and the rest of the people. Power differences in the society are to blame for this conflict (Lynch and Michalowski, 2006). After Sutherland introduced the idea of "white-collar crime," Mills (1956) came up with the term "power elite" to describe the imbalance of power between military, political, and business elites and the rest of the population, who are not as powerful. In response to Sutherland's explanation of white-collar crime, this was said. This difference is deemed immoral and unlawful since it breaches the principle of equal treatment under the law. To be more explicit, according to this perspective, those in power have the capacity to manipulate the law in order to maintain their position and continue to prosper while keeping others in their proper place (Siegel and Welsh, 2011). Acts of crime and deviance are seen as relative concepts since, by definition, they may change from culture to culture and across history (Barkan, 2012). Becker (1963) states that "social groupings produce deviation by establishing the norms whose violation defines deviance and by applying these rules to specific individuals and labelling them as outsiders." In other words, "social groups create deviance by establishing the rules whose violation constitutes deviance." White-collar crimes such as war profiteering, government corruption, and toxic dumping may be overlooked by the same elite group of officials that labels and prohibits street crime in order to protect powerful interests.

Due to the fact that illegality is established by a distinct elite group of officials (the legislature), this elite group may likewise label and ban street crime. Therefore, companies may participate in unethical behaviour (i.e., willful, reckless, and negligent behaviour) that is not legally characterised as illegal (for example, regulatory offences). Even though these acts may kill and harm more people yearly than street crimes, companies have no cause to fear legal consequences for their conduct (Lynch and Michalowski, 2006). When considering typologies, it is reasonable to remark that the three power elite institutions alluded to here are corporate, political, and military. Each of these three sorts of institutions may be detrimental to society through influencing the economy, the government, and basic human rights, in that order (Simon & Eitzen, 1993). Included in economic domination are offences that are both physically and financially harmful. When corporations perpetrate fraud against the government (Theobald, 2009) or engage in tax evasion, elite deviance may have a detrimental effect on the public's finances (DeBacker, Heim and Tran, 2012). Business practises such as price-fixing (i.e., determining the price of a product or service instead of letting supply and demand determine it; Connor, 2008), price-gouging (i.e., artificially inflating prices when there is no alternative retailer available; Zwolinski, 2008), and false advertising and misrepresentation of products can also deceive consumers (Tushnet, 2010).

In addition, competitors are susceptible to antitrust law violations, such as monopolistic conduct (Dogan and Lemley, 2008) and insider trading, which is defined as the acquisition or sale of a security by a person with access to nonpublic information (Meulbroek, 2012). In conclusion, it is feasible to take advantage of owners and creditors by management fraud (Fairchild, Crawford, and Saqlain, 2009), self-dealing (i.e., a fiduciary acting in his or her own best interest in a transaction rather than his clients') (Djankov et al., 2008), and strategic bankruptcy (Moerman and Van De Laan, 2009). Toxic emissions in excess of the legal limit (Katz, 2012; Lynch and Stretesky, 2010), toxic dumping and hazardous waste disposal (Waldo, 2009), and the release of lethal toxins are examples of business infractions that have the potential to inflict physical harm to members of the general public (Rao, 2012). In addition, corporations might cause harm to consumers via the creation and distribution of dangerous products (Pyke and Tang, 2010). Last but not least, employees may be exposed to hazardous working conditions (Landsbergis, 2009), which may lead to preventable occupational diseases, accidents, and deaths (MacDonald, Cohen, Baron and Burchfiel, 2009).

In a similar spirit, crimes perpetrated by experts in the medical, legal, intellectual, and religious areas might be considered instances of elite deviance. This is because the perpetrators of these crimes operate under the guise of respectability and with the protection of strong guilds. To be more specific, medical practitioners may harm their patients by the practise of medical negligence and malpractice, the conduct of unneeded procedures, tests, and treatments, as well as through the practise of deceptive and fraudulent billing (Miller, 2012). The same thing occurs when attorneys perpetrate fraud against their clients or aid their clients in committing crimes (Abel, 2012).

Government control, also known as state crime, may occur domestically when the legislative, judicial, and executive departments of government commit crimes. Examples include corruption (Issacharoff, 2010), corporate tax loopholes (McIntyre, Gardner, Wilkins, and Phillips, 2011), crimes of electioneering and seizure of power (Christensen and Colvin, 2009), and abuses of individual civil rights such as unlawful monitoring by the government (Werbner, 2010). Coups d'état (Marshall, 2009), breaches of international law, illegal warfare and war profiteering (Sandholtz, 2009), the fear of nuclear war (Escalona, 1982), official repression and corruption (Ross, 2010), and even cooperation with organised crime may destabilise neighbouring states (Armao, 2012). Loss of public trust in elites

whose behaviour causes demoralisation, cynicism, alienation, and deviance is another another indirect negative consequence of state crime and government control (i.e., street crime). The denial of human rights is a further part of the issue. State terrorism may also include the denial of human rights. The phrase "denial of basic human rights" refers to threats to the dignity and quality of life of the human race as a whole, and in particular oppressed minorities. When the unequal distribution of power places non-elites at the mercy of profit-seeking organisations that also write and control the law, it is naturally expected that this would occur. Human rights breaches in the form of economic exploitation and human trafficking may be committed against workers in underdeveloped or unstable nations (Shelley, 2010). All of these facts tend to have a negative influence on the general population, which often serves as a trigger for systemic problems.

White-collar crime is also known as elite deviance, and psychologist David Sutherland defines it as "crime committed by a respectable and highly placed individual in the course of his work" (Sutherland 1945). In 1956, C. Wright Mills published *The Power Elite*, which led to the invention of the phrase "the power elite" to describe the most influential individuals in military, commerce, and government (Mills 1956). In this perspective, Mills emphasised the interwoven ties of people in positions of power, which ultimately led to their success while rendering the common citizen relatively powerless. According to the common concept of elite deviance, persons in positions of authority engage in deviant behaviour to accumulate personal fortune or political influence. The notion of "elite deviance" has a long and murky history, and no one definition truly captures its significance. Elite deviance is characterised by an extensive array of unlawful and anticompetitive behaviours, including price manipulation, healthcare fraud, and antitrust violations. Academics have often bent and altered the idea of elite deviance because it is so susceptible to interpretation. However, there are certain essential features that remain constant, such as the position of the upper classes. *Elite Deviance* by David Simon has a description that is maybe the most comprehensive and insightful of all.

According to Alex Thio, those in positions of authority and organisational leaders are more likely to engage in deviant behaviour for three reasons: (1) It's harder for them to reach their goals in a legal way; (2) They have more chances to cheat on their taxes or steal from their boss; and (3) Social controls aren't as strong (Salinger, 2005). People in positions of power are more likely to do these bad things because institutions are hard to change and elites who break the rules don't get punished as harshly as other people. At its most basic level, elite deviance can be seen as "violating and manipulating" the rules that define trustworthy behaviour (Shapiro 1990). In the end, people and organisations build their elite status on different levels of trust.

Unquestionably, the issue of social class and access to society's resources is at the core of the discourse around elite misbehaviour. These individuals control or own the bulk of organisations, industries, finances, education, commerce, the military, communications, civic affairs, and law. Today, top occupations are dominated by upper-class individuals (Dye and Zeigler, 1993). As a result, the concept of a "white-collar criminal" differs from that of a "common criminal" since the incentives that drive each kind of offender stem from different macro-level organisational and social processes (Benson & Moore, 1992). This is partially due to the manner in which highbrow news covers criminal demographics; highbrow media portrays people of the working class and the unemployed as criminals much more often than upper-class citizens (Grabe, 1997). The media's portrayal of crime and deviance focuses on non-elite segments of society and serves to promote corporate capitalism as a flawed, but ultimately better economic system (*A Theory of Elite Deviance*). This perspective contributes to the

preservation of a classist society, which, as previously noted, makes it easier for elites to engage in destructive conduct.

In the corporate sector, well-known instances of elite deviation have been a chronic issue throughout the last few decades. For instance, the Enron et al. (2017) proceedings, which occurred in the United States between 2001 and 2002, were the first big white-collar crime prosecution of the 21st century (Friedrichs, 2004). Additionally, in 2003, economic analysts estimated that price fixing was costing the American public up to \$78 billion yearly (Salinger, 2005). For example, the 2009 conviction of Bernie Madoff for securities fraud, money laundering, and nine other offences resulted in a \$64.8 billion loss for his clients. White-collar crimes annually cost the United States between \$426 billion and \$1.7 trillion. In contrast, street crime costs the United States government over 179 billion dollars each year. These three incidents are just a small sampling of the high-level criminal conduct that has occurred in the 21st century so far. The subject of morality (or "higher immorality") is brought up in relation to Mills' theory of the power elite. According to Mills, affluent and influential individuals of society who engage in unethical financial, political, and economic practises are to blame for the rise in immorality. This may include violating antitrust rules, gaining a tax benefit as a company, and participating in certain compensation practises (Mills 1963). Individuals may find themselves in perilous situations where deviant or unlawful behaviour looks appropriate as a means of accomplishing their objectives if they want power and wealth (Chambliss 1989). According to what Simon has said, "elites regularly do heinous deeds without recognising their wrongdoing." [Bibliography required] (1999). As a consequence, elite deviance is fundamentally a kind of deviation that is built around a privilege-based system.

The intertwined nature of elite deviance and politics has a tendency to demonstrate that the political sphere is one of the most blatantly privileged regions within the realm of elite deviance. Corruption in politics and criminal activity are two instances of abuses of power that both profit from and contribute to the shroud of secrecy that surrounds powerful institutions, organisations, and people. In their most basic forms, political corruption and organised crime are both the use of political power to get or keep personal financial gain, as well as the use of dishonest methods to get and keep political power (Simon, 1999). In a more detailed look at the political and government structure, the secrecy, lies, and abuses of power by government officials and agencies build on the idea of higher immorality (i.e. the political elite). This is done to keep the existing power and dominance structures in place. Because of these structural inequalities, it is very easy for the elite to act badly, and this is still hardly ever acknowledged.

In spite of the increased awareness among the general population about elite deviance and criminality, this kind of conduct is still quite simple to engage in. In addition, those who conduct elite deviance are met with a limited number of effective deterrents owing to the fact that the sanctions for such behaviours are very light. The limited portrayal of elite crime in the media allows for the continuation of elite deviance, which in turn helps the power elite to keep their grip over the portrayal of deviance in society. Even when the accountability processes seem to be undergoing some kind of change, the deeply rooted power structures are still in place, which allows elite misconduct to continue regardless of the possible repercussions. Nevertheless, when one considers the future, it seems that the general public's perspective of elite misbehaviour is undergoing a transition. Instead of being able to profit from the usual cloak of secrecy and protection that traditionally enveloped their conduct, powerful persons are increasingly finding themselves subjected to public claims of criminal activity as well as jail. This trend has not been seen before.

The above is made abundantly clear by the activities that are now taking place at the Niger Delta Development Commission. We are able to witness that some elite deviances are being addressed openly, and disputes are flourishing as a result of a collision of interests between the elites in this organisation and the underdevelopment of the South-South.

Politicians

Different scholars have defined the concept of a politician in various ways in the past. According to the Webster's New World College Dictionary (2013) a politician is "a person who is involved in party politics or who holds or wants to hold an elected position in government. Politicians propose, support, and make the laws that govern the country and, by extension, its people. A politician is simply someone who wants to get political power in the government. People who engage in political activity, particularly inside party politics, are referred to as politicians. According to Webster's New World College Dictionary (2013), positions may range from those in elected municipal offices to those in elective executive and legislative posts of regional and national governments.

Politicians have always been recognised for their oratory, which may take the form of speeches or commercials for political campaigns to reach a broader audience. They are especially well-known for their use of popular themes, which allow them to build their political viewpoints in words that are already recognisable to the people (Charteris-Black, 2005). Due of the propagation capabilities of the media, politicians are required to become proficient users of it (Feldman, 2000). Politicians throughout the 19th century made extensive use of many forms of media, including newspapers, magazines, pamphlets, and posters, as well as billboards and other types of outdoor advertising (Dinkin, 1989). In the 20th century, politicians were more active in radio and television, which resulted in television advertisements being the single most costly component of electioneering campaigns (Jamieson and Spillett, 2014). They have gotten more connected with social media in the 21st century as a result of the widespread usage of the internet and cellphones all across the world (Pearlman, 2012).

A significant number of naysayers often accuse politicians of being disconnected from the general public or of denying the public access to themselves. Some sources of contention include the language that politicians use, which is often interpreted as an attempt to "obscure, mislead, and confuse" the public and has been criticised for being overly formal, filled with many euphemistic and metaphorical expressions, and contains a large number of such expressions (Barry, 2007). This is the prevalent sentiment in Nigeria, and more specifically in the South-South region, where politicians are frequently seen as individuals who are armed with flattering words to vote the masses in their favour, only to abandon the elected once they have achieved the positions of elective power of their choosing.

The common perception of politicians is that they are ignorant, self-centered, manipulative, dishonest, inept, and corrupt. They are seen as more interested in receiving money in return for products or services than than working for the benefit of the broader public (Heidenheimer and Johnston, 2011). Politicians are often considered to be the "most reviled professions" in many different nations (Heidenheimer and Johnston, 2011). This is true to a considerable degree in the South-South region of Nigeria, which is a big part of the reason why this study has been motivated to thoroughly investigate some of the characteristics and mysteries of the people who live there.

Conflict

A great number of experts in their fields have offered a variety of explanations about how to

characterise the idea of conflict. According to the definition provided by Cohen, Davis, and Aboelata (2011), conflict is "a scenario involving two or more parties who perceive their positions as irreconcilable with one another." The word "conflict" has a negative connotation, yet there are some kinds of conflicts that are good because they may bring about change. According to Sethi (2006), "the loss of life is merely one consequence of conflicts." [Citation needed] Other negative effects include the deterioration of food distribution networks, the collapse of public services, the loss of revenue, the displacement of people, an increase in criminal activity, and an increase in insecurity. The immediate expenses imposed by wars, although being substantial, only constitute a tiny part of the price that the afflicted population has to pay. This is an essential point to keep in mind, since it is crucial to highlight that the immediate costs imposed by conflicts. Specifically, the institutional costs of conflict may have detrimental effects on the long-term evolution of a civilization. The physical infrastructure such as roads and buildings that are damaged or destroyed during conflicts can be repaired or rebuilt, albeit at a very high cost; however, the breakdown of institutions, the loss of mutual trust and understanding, and the trauma that is heaped on the vulnerable population make it very likely that the bad blood will persist, and conflicts and violence will continue to occur in the future. They trap whole societies in vicious cycles of conflict that never end, which is why preventing conflicts or resolving them in their early phases is such a fascinating task.

A dispute is not a one-time occurrence but rather an ongoing, multi-step process that may take many distinct forms. The goals of the many parties engaged, their strategies, the intensity levels, the potential damage, and other aspects of the conflict are all subject to change as it progresses through its various stages. As a result, the most effective method of conflict management will seem different depending on the stage. Because of this, it is vital to have a comprehensive grasp of the dynamics of conflict throughout its life cycle in order to apply tactics for conflict prevention and management.

Cox (1974) explains that "the potential for conflict will always exist in a society with its members having different mores, interests, and socio-economic conditions and needs. Thus, in any society, for a variety of reasons, perceptions may be conceived about group or communal interests being harmed or relatively deprived. If fostered, these may lead to expressions of discontent against the State or other social group(s)/communities. If such discontent is not attended to in the primary stages or dealt with in a manner which aggravates the already prevailing feeling of injustice done to the group/community, a major conflict situation may arise".

There are several varieties of violent conflict. According to Coleman (1957), there are three fundamental forms of conflict that will be explored in this article: conflict over a task, conflict with other people, and dispute over how things should be done. When it comes to facts or views from authority, members of the group could have different perspectives. There is room for doubt on the interpretation of the evidence. "Task conflict" refers to differences in opinion over the primary topics of the conversation. The quality of judgments and critical thinking processes may both be significantly improved when there is conflict between tasks.

The interpersonal interactions that exist inside the company are another possible source of friction and conflict. The dispute that the vast majority of people refer to as a "personality clash" is what is meant when people talk about interpersonal conflict. This "clash" may take the shape of hostile statements that connect to the personal traits of a group member or neglect any organisational aims in order to antagonise a specific group member. Both of these scenarios are examples of how this "clash" might manifest itself. This sort of conflict is characterised by the use of more understated and nonverbal actions. There is a possibility of ice-cold stares, or at the other end of the spectrum, a complete

avoidance of eye contact. It's possible that interpersonal conflict is unavoidable, yet it still has to be handled well for optimum group preservation.

According to Dahrendorf in French (1969), "at least four conditions are necessary if a conflict situation can be said to exist: (1) there must be sets of individuals exhibiting some level of organization. These could be voluntary groups, religious groups, families, communities, nations, or some other collections of individuals. (2) There must be some level of interaction among group members. Without contact (and communication) there can be no conflict. The contact may merely be propaganda about another people, culture, or group; it need not be personal. (3) There must be different levels of positions to be occupied by group members - a hierarchy of relationships. All individuals cannot occupy the same positions at the same time. (4) There must exist a scarcity of needed or desired resources and a general dissatisfaction among members about how these resources are being distributed. When there is dissatisfaction, conflict can erupt". Because communication within a small group functions as a system, there is no one variable that acts in isolation. Alterations to one variable could result in changes to the other variables. Due to the fact that the system is always evolving, it is possible for a very small group to be confronted with more than one kind of conflict at the same time (Knutson and Kowitz, 1977).

Robinson (1972) lists the following as the dimensions of conflict: (1) threats or conflicts over territory, regardless of whether the borders of the territory are physical, social, or work boundaries; and (2) threats to values, objectives, and policies, in addition to threats to conduct. Concerning the territory, dangers to the integrity of the physical borders are often posed by disagreements over ownership of land or contention on the use of water resources by various groups.

There is a potential for job descriptions to pose a risk to the limits of the workplace. Conflicts may arise inside companies when job tasks are incompatible with one another or are not clearly defined. When there are several services and agencies that perform similar functions, it's possible for there to be competition over territory for the job they provide. There is the potential for conflict when there are disagreements on who has jurisdiction over emergency medical services, school districts, law enforcement (local police, county sheriffs, and state highway patrol), and political entities (townships, cities, and counties).

It is common practise for groups to "protect" their territories and keep their boundaries intact by excluding members of other groups, rewarding and/or pressuring members of the group for the degree to which they adhere to group norms and defend the territory in question, and maintaining beliefs that are ethnocentric. Additionally, there is a possibility for groups to "tend to feel that their way of thinking and doing things is not just the best but also the only proper way." Sociologists use the term "ethnocentrism" to refer to the notion that members of one group consider their practises to be superior to those of all other groups (Mack, 1969). In addition, Mack maintains that ethnocentrism is a significant root cause of the conflict as well as an element that contributes to its ongoing nature. It's possible that groups won't be as physically and socially separated as they were in the past in a society that's increasingly urbanising and industrialising.

Values themselves may be put at jeopardy by conflict. Concerns about the environment, abortion, international trade deals, and the subject matter taught in public schools all have the potential to endanger people and groups whose value systems are fundamentally distinct from one another. It's possible that disagreements may arise over rules, including strictly adhering to the regulations set out

by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) or the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). Threats to behaviour are another potential aspect of conflict: "when values, regulations, and objectives are modified, when territories are redrawn, one must learn new behaviour skills" (Robinson 1972).

There are positive aspects to certain disagreements. When members of different groups come together to work toward a shared goal, this may strengthen the unity and cohesiveness within each of those groups. According to Mack (1969), conflict has the potential to define, preserve, and enhance the borders of a group. This may in turn contribute to the uniqueness of the group while also improving its solidarity and cohesiveness. Conflict also destroys groups, both in the sense that it causes changes in the way power is shared and in the sense that it can lead to the death of a group that loses a fight. Conflict helps people band together.... Conflict also breaks up groups, both in the sense that it causes changes in the way power is shared.

Internal social conflicts about goals, values, or interests that don't go against the basic assumptions of the relationship tend to be good for the social structure. For example, if two people have different goals, values, or interests but neither challenges the basic assumptions upon which the relationship is founded, then These kinds of disputes have a tendency to make it feasible to modify the norms and power relations inside groups so that they are more in line with the perceived demands of the group's individual members or sub-groups. It is possible for conflict to result in the formation of alliances with other groups, the formation of links between organisations with a loose structure, or the gathering of various people and groups from within a community in order to combat a shared danger. Recent events in a variety of localities have brought together previously separate people and organisations to discuss topics such as the kinds of books that are read in public schools. Additionally, conflict has the potential to obstruct regular channels of cooperation between different parts of the society. Although "change often takes place without conflict, and conflict does not necessarily cause change," it is possible for conflict to bring about societal transformation (Cox, 1974). In addition to the shift that is desired, conflict may have unintended and negative consequences. Conflict may escalate into violence and, in the worst possible scenarios, lead to devastation and loss of life. The expression "conflict becomes violence when the process escalates to overt hostility and includes destructive activity," which means that conflict does not automatically indicate or lead to violent behaviour (Robinson and Clifford, 1974) When a group is compelled to adapt because its rights and privileges have been challenged or usurped, this may also lead to conflict, which can then escalate into violent behaviour (Robinson 1972).

In summarizing the effects of conflict, it can be said that they are many and varied, as well as unpredictable. In general, Robinson (1972) points out that conflict may:

- 1) cause damage to persons or groups;
- 2) provide desirable outcomes; and
- 3) contribute to defining and honing community concerns in order to facilitate better decision-making.
- 4) contribute to the increased visibility of a group;
- 5) contribute to increased acrimony, estrangement, and polarisation;
- 6) foster greater cohesiveness, togetherness, and solidarity among members of a group;
- 7) bolster the borders between groups;

- 8) Contribute to the establishment of a new organisation;
- 9) make a group less powerful or perhaps extinct;
- 10) raise the level of tension inside the group or between the groupings;
- 11) bring about the reorganisation of a group;
- 12) result in collaborations with other types of organisations;
- 13) Interrupt conventional avenues of communication and collaboration; and
- 14) grow aggressive.

As we have seen, there are various benefits that may come from conflict. Conflict, on the other hand, has the potential to be harmful in groups since it drains the energy of individual group members. However, conflict has the potential to disrupt the normal functioning of a group and to generate such a high level of interpersonal enmity that members of the group may become reluctant or unable to cooperate with one another.

Theoretical Review

The Elite theory serves as the guiding principle for this article due to the nature of the issue. Vilfredo Pareto, Gaetano Mosca, Robert Michels, Raymond Aron, Giovanni Sartori, James Burnham, Joseph Schumpeter, and Karl Mannheim are some of the people who have supported this idea. Other proponents of this theory include (Mahajan 2008). The works of Gaetano Mosca (1858-1941), Vilfredo Pareto (1848-1923), and Robert Michels are where elite theory can be traced back to its roots the most clearly (1876-1936). Mosca (295-307) places an emphasis on the ways in which small minorities are able to out-organize and outwit large majorities. He also states that "political classes," which is Mosca's term for political elites, typically have "a certain material, intellectual, or even moral superiority" over the people they govern.

The primary idea or presumption that underpins the Elite Theory is that there exists within every society a subset of the general population that is responsible for making the most important policy choices. The elite have a significant amount of political power because the choices they make have significant political ramifications. When there is a concerted attempt and practise to exercise exclusive decision making as a prerogative of social rank or class, this is an example of the elite approach to politics, which may be identified by its presence. Elitism is discriminating, pre-emptive, and saviours of a divine right to declare what politics ought to be, claim the political office, and tend to overlook popular opinion and competence. Elitists believe they have a divine right to define what politics ought to be. The elite stake their claim to power and continue to hold onto it via perpetuation until circumstances force them from power (Mbah 2006).

Burton and Higley (1998), cited in Pareto (1935) makes the hypothesis that "in a society with truly unrestricted social mobility, elites would consist of the most talented and deserving individuals; but in actual societies, elites are those most adept at using the two modes of political rule, force and persuasion, and who typically enjoy important advantages such as inherited wealth and family connections." Following in Machiavelli's footsteps, Pareto outlines alternating forms of ruling elites, which he compared to lions and foxes. Pareto's work was influenced by the Italian political thinker. Michels established the foundation for elites ("oligarchies") in the requirement of large organisations

for leaders and experts in order for them to function effectively; as these individuals gain control of funds, information flows, promotions, and other aspects of the organization's functioning, power becomes concentrated in their hands (Linz, 2006). Aspirations for truly democratic and equal societies are seen as being fruitless by all three of these individuals, who place an emphasis on the inevitability of elites as well as their relative autonomy. This "futility thesis" is rejected by a good number of social radicals and democratic socialists (Femia, 2001). They have been working towards proving the theory that "specific elites are not people with better endowments or organisational abilities, but rather only those who are socially advantaged in power conflicts." The adherents of this view argue that the existence of elites can be eradicated in one of two ways: either by eliminating the social advantages that some people enjoy or by doing away with the power concentrations that spur competitions among them. These two solutions, which often go hand in hand, are proposed as ways to put an end to the existence of elites.

However, there is no documented occasion in the course of human history in which these treatments have been effectively implemented in a large population for any appreciable amount of time. A general theory of elites and politics may be formed from the writings of Mosca, Pareto, and Michels since their works provide a paradigm from which such a theory may be constructed (Field and Higley, 1980). However, attempts to develop such a theory have not shown very fruitful results thus far (Dye, 2002). It is hard to find a cause-and-effect relationship between elites and major patterns of political behaviour. There is no generally accepted typology of elites, and there is no generally accepted description of how and when one type of elite replaces another. Also, political interactions between elites and populations that are not considered elite are only captured piecemeal.

Even so, political scientists and sociologists spend a lot of time studying elites and the important roles they play in a wide range of political events, such as democratic transitions and breakdowns, revolutions, different types of political regimes, mass movements, democratic politics, globalisation, and many more. By outlining a general approach to elites and politics, this study aims to give Elite Theory and the attention paid to elites more coherence and direction, which is grossly inaccurate as is the case in the South-South of Nigeria, where the ruling political elite have been mostly involved in elite deviance acts that have had a big impact on the development of this geo-political zone.

Relating this theory to this study, it is proper to say that it is the political elite in the South-South that always cause the political conflicts amongst themselves because they use their prestigious positions to tussle for the perks and lucre of power for self-aggrandisement instead of developing the South-South. Yet, some of the same class manipulate, close down, bribe, arm-twist and cause many other things happen to ensure that the status quo is maintained in their favour. They sometimes overreach themselves by fighting one another for ego and greedy purposes to the underdevelopment of the South-South. Nevertheless, some of their machinations turn out to be too obvious as is practically the case in the NDDC that is like their rallying point to milk this geo-political zone dry. This predicament stalls the pace of development in the South-South, which calls for immediate solutions through a better comprehension of the basic assumptions of the Elite theory in relation to this paper.

It is on the strength of the foregoing considerations that the researcher decided to use the Elite Theory to explain and substantiate the relationship between elite deviance and the rising rate of conflict among politicians in South-South of Nigeria.

Methodology

This paper has to be guided by the historical approach that has affinity with qualitative research

method. This method is suitable for this paper because it will enable readers to understand the current rising rate of conflict amongst politicians in the South-South through a holistic perspective. This study extensively used secondary sources of data. The secondary data that was collected and used in this research were analysed with the help of content analysis. The process of content analysis includes the condensation of raw data into categories or topics on the basis of sound inference and interpretation. The ability to reason and apply oneself is nearly entirely responsible for determining the outcome of this stage, which is of vital importance to the whole process of analysis.

Discussions

Elite Deviance and Rising Rate of Conflict among South-South Politicians

A number of academics have published papers on elite deviance and the increasing number of confrontations that occur amongst politicians in the South-South of Nigeria. Moses Siloko Siasia is the Chairman of the Nigerian Young Professionals Forum (NYPF) and the convener of the Niger Delta Young Professionals (NDYP). He is also a leading advocate for the development of the Niger Delta Region and has raised concerns over what he describes as a "continued lack of visible evidence to suggest that there are serious efforts, by key stakeholders in government towards ensuring that the South-South attains meaningful economic and infrastructural development." He said that there is an

In a statement that was released to the press, Siasia said that the devastating COVID-19 epidemic has shown that some state governments in the South-South are not ready and are not disciplined, and that they take advantage of state resources. He said that this region has enough resources and goodwill to be self-sufficient if those in power and in charge of helping the average people of the South-South weren't so wasteful and careless with the people's money. He said that this area has enough resources and goodwill to be able to take care of itself.

Siasia (2020) said "I weep for the Niger Delta because if this global economic decline and expected recession continues, our region will be the most affected because it has been getting trillions of dollars from the federal government for the past three to four decades." This was because of the sudden, but expected, drop in the price of crude oil on the international market, the lower demand for crude oil because of the COVID-19 pandemic-related shutdowns, and the changes in exchange rates. According to Siasia (2020) it's a shame that, there aren't any real investments in infrastructure to get our region ready for a time like this. He further asserted that, "With 13% derivation and all the billions that have been given to the region, there is nothing to show for it because it has not been used or accounted for properly." Instead, these funds have been used to pay for our government officials' expensive tastes and high-living ways. If these economic problems keep getting worse, things will get worse in the Niger Delta, and young people, women, and our children will suffer more (Siasia, 2020).

It's important to remember that the federal government and some oil companies have tried to develop the Niger Delta region in a number of ways over the past few decades. As part of these efforts, billions of dollars have been sent to the area through a wide range of programmes and organisations, such as the NDDC, the Presidential Amnesty Program, the 13% derivations funds, the Ecological fund, and many others. Siasia (2020) says that these efforts have only led to corruption and waste, since only a few wealthy people in the area have been able to use these resources for their own pleasure while the rest of the area remains poor.

Everyone agrees that good governance is key to development and a key part of achieving sustainable

development goals and reducing the number of people living in extreme poverty. So, leaders are urged to follow the basic rules of good governance to encourage the growth that is needed to reach the sustainable development goals (SDGs). But there is a clear lack of good governance in the South-South region, which is needed to drive development. Even though the region is where most of the country's crude oil and gas are produced, it has been underdeveloped on a large scale. One immediate effect of the lack of good governance in the region is that there is no basic infrastructure and the rate of poverty in the region is alarmingly. People say that the low level of development in the area is due to large-scale looting that has become institutionalised at the State and Local Government levels and due to the federal government neglect of the area (Arugu & Kalama, J2018).

Maiangwa (2012) has noted that the Nigerian State “command and expend vast resources, but it cannot get things. Hence, the state has become the primary means for the accumulation of personal wealth”. In a similar vein, the philosophy of prebendalism asserts that governmental posts are seen to be pretends that may be taken by office holders, who exploit them to gain financial rewards for themselves and their cronies. Prebendalism is a kind of appropriativism. Seteolu, (2005) quoted in Maiangwa, (2012) posited that “clientism assists us to understand the mechanism of how class control legitimizes the lopsided distribution of resources among social groups and enhances states of the political elite”. With the politics of prebendalism and clientelism being the mainstream nature of politicking, there is hardly any prospect of development in the South-South region of Nigeria.

Causative Factors of Elite Deviance amongst South-South Politicians

Elite deviance in the South-South is caused by a cluster of factors. Some of them include the warping of democracy for ‘choice’ rather than duly elected candidates to emerge. This situation makes it possible for the godfathers and godsons to see the South-South region as their personal businesses to the underdevelopment of this region. Therefore, politics in the South-South region are based on prebendalism and clientelism, which helps us understand why the area is corrupt and underdeveloped. Since democratic government came back to the South-South in 1999, governors, local government chairs, and other public office holders have been stealing the money that comes to these states without getting caught. In its report, the Commission for Africa in 2005 posited that “Nigeria has suffered from government that have looted the resources of the state: that could not or would not deliver services to their people; that in many cases were predatory, corruptly extracting their countries” (Maiangwa, 2012).

According to Ake (2000), the political environment provides the most significant barrier to effective government. The politics of self-aggrandizement and exploitation, at the price of advancing the common benefit of the people, is the driving force behind the pursuit of political power. Also, Ikporukpo (2001) asserted that the prevalent perception in the South-South is that the people are being deprived of the benefits of oil and gas and exploited; and as a result, this has resulted in underdevelopment and widespread poverty as a result of poor governance. Ikporukpo (2001) asserted that the predominant characteristics of South-South area are poor governance, a high degree of corruption, and a lack of accountability at both the state and local government levels. This is true of governance at all levels (Arugu & Kalama, 2018). It has been shown that pervasive corruption is to blame for the inability of the government at all levels to address the development difficulties that are being faced by the people, despite the enormous funds that have accrued from the area. It has been argued in several different quarters that the region would have been considered a developed area if the government officials in the area had prudently utilised the revenue accruing to their states and local government areas for the benefit of the people through the creation of jobs and the development of

infrastructure (Arugu & Kalama, 2018). When discussing the ways in which deviance among elites or corruption has impeded development in the South-South, Joseph Amberkedelin, a member of the South-South Element Progressives Union, was described in Maiangwa (2012) as claiming that "the amount of money that has accrued to South-South governors in the previous nine years is enough, more than enough to alter the Niger Delta." ...if the money that has been given to the governors of the South-South today were spent prudently and religiously, we would not be facing the challenges that we are now having in the area. What are these people asking for anyway? Roads, water, electricity, school buildings and furniture for these schools...The corruption among the governors in the South-South is enormous - the stealing is enormous". All of the foregoing realities can account for the sorry state of development in the South-South today.

Elite Deviance and Development in South-South

The phenomenon of elite deviance obviously appears to have shattered the socio-economic and political development of the South-South. It is saddening to note that in spite of the fact that South-South is the region that produces the mainstay of Nigeria, this region is grossly underdeveloped. Many of the roads have turned out to be death traps as they are highly dilapidated. The hospitals, where they are available are poorly equipped and can hardly cater to the health needs of the people of this area. Many of the schools in the Niger Delta are underequipped with modern educational facilities. There is a high level of unemployment in the region, which in the long run affects the capacity of the youth of this region to assist themselves. Water transportation system is in horrible state and have turned out to be a haven for sea pirates. Yet, instead of focusing on how to move the South-South forward, the elite in NDDC are committed today more to engaging in conflicts that reveal how they strive to loot the resources of NDDC while the region remains underdeveloped.

It is saddening to note that instead of finding ways of contributing to the development of the South-South region, the political elite in the region are given more to measures and nuances that worsen the state of underdevelopment in this region. A part of the problem of the South-South is that the elite in this establishment emerge through the politics of godfatherism that makes them to turn their attention from sustainable development to the satisfaction of the whims and caprices of their political godfathers in the show of politics of prebendalism and clientelism. This condition only deepens the state of underdevelopment of the South-South (Paki & Ebienfa, 2011).

Besides, there is hardly public accountability as the resources meant for development are care freely squandered. If anything, the elite in the South-South use their exalted positions to compensate political friends and relatives. This can in part account for many inept people heading the public offices in the zone to its underdevelopment. Many social infrastructure in the South-South are in bad shape. The markets are virtually dilapidated; the motor parks continually stink and are hardly used by the people of this region as they prefer private transport companies that are better organized; the communities in this area lack a lot of developmental projects like qualitative education, electricity, hospitals, roads, pipe-borne water, drainages, bus stops, maternities etc in spite of the presence of the political elite and established NDDC that was meant to cater for some of these problems (Paki & Ebienfa, 2011).

Furthermore, there is no clear-cut accountability by the ruling political elite in the South-South. Ideally, they are supposed to be periodically accountable to the people, which should motivate them to contribute to pulling this region out of underdevelopment. What we frequently observe is a case of the political elite waiting for the statutory allocations from Abuja monthly. As the money comes, nothing

tangible is done in the form of sustainable development with it. If anything, they think of their personal interests first before that of the collective of South-South people they are meant to serve. These circumstances worsen the state of underdevelopment in the South-South as elite conflict, corruption, lack of accountability etc flourish in the region.

The above being evident, it is disheartening to notice that in spite of the enormous statutory allocations to this geopolitical zone, the political elite of this region are unable to ease the suffering of the people. This is a situation that should not be tolerated. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the region is plagued by administrative neglect, deteriorating social infrastructure and services, high unemployment, social deprivation, abject poverty, filth and squalor, and endemic conflict. All of these factors contribute to the region's poor condition. The area is one of the clearest and most unsettling illustrations of the "resources curse" that can be found anywhere in the globe (Paki & Ebienfa, 2011, p. 136). It is a contradiction that the majority of people in the South-South live in a condition of chronic wants despite the region's rich wealth, which happens to be the fiscal base of the Nigerian state. Despite this fact, the South-South is home to the majority of Nigeria's poorest people. The area is emblematic of one of the most severe examples of poverty and underdevelopment that may be found in the midst of abundant resources. While poverty and unemployment rates are at all-time highs, there has been virtually little progress made in terms of infrastructure development. There are around 80 percent of people living in poverty, and there are 70 percent of people without jobs. There is a severe lack of access to fundamental social utilities. For instance, more than eighty percent of the settlements that are located along the coast or rivers get their water supply for drinking, cooking, and other domestic purposes from contaminated rivers, streams, and lakes that are also used for the disposal of human waste and other types of trash. The majority of the inhabitants of the upland settlements get their water from shallow wells that are polluted. In point of fact, the South-South is much behind the rest of the country in terms of any and all measurements or indices of progress (Ibaba, 2005). Simply put, therefore, it is safe to say that the political elite are hardly uplifting the South-South from underdevelopment given the foregoing realities and rather focus on conflicts that impinge on their selfish interests.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

Ideally, the political elite are supposed to be very contributory to development in the South-South of Nigeria since they are the leaders of the people. However, it is obvious that elite deviance has immensely affected development in this geo-political zone in Nigeria. Instead of focusing on how to develop their constituencies, the ruling political elite engage in deviant acts that worsen the state of underdevelopment in the South-South. This situation has been traced to be as a result of some variables like class interest of the political elite, poor attitude of this class, greed, weak institutional structures, etc that if properly checked and controlled, could help salvage the situation that is deteriorating every day and therefore increasing the underdevelopment of this region. Elite deviance will not produce a socio-economic and political environment for peace to reign, which in part can explain why they are always having conflicts amongst themselves. It is only when the expectations of justice and fairness are failed, like it is practically the case in the South-South today that problems begin to escalate beyond imagination to the pain of the people of the South-South, which is a situation that threatens the development of the area and respect for the political elite of the South-South.

For the generality of the people of South-South to feel comfortable with their political elite, they have

to be assured by action that they will use their exalted positions to contribute positively towards rural development in this area and distance themselves from elite deviance. Considering that development is very important to any polity, the political elite of this area are best advised to create the enabling environment for development to flourish, which the South-South strongly needs and urgently given her realities that have turned her to a “Paradise Lost”.

The foregoing plea is pertinent because over the last decade most stakeholders effectively treated conflict in the Niger Delta as a short-term risk to be managed. The Nigerian government, the oil industry, and the international community are increasingly feeling the consequences of this approach. While some causes of the Niger Delta conflict remain localized, the days when violence in the region could be called a local issue are long gone. It is time the international community recognizes the need to engage more fully in this region, where effects are measured in millions of people and billions of dollars, in terms of both the continuing damage from violence and the benefits that could come from ending it for the overall good of humanity and Nigeria as a nation.

Recommendations

The recommendations of this study are as follows:

1. There is the need for the people of South-South of Nigeria to always elect or allow persons with proven records of integrity and devotedness to development to be their political elite all times.
2. The people of South-South owe it to themselves to concertedly spell out constitutionally the roles they expect of their political elite for the overall development of this geo-political zone in Nigeria.
3. There is supposed to be a forum for the political elite and the generality of the people of South-South to reason cordially on how to bring about the development of this area. This will bring about peace and harmony to this area.
4. There is the need for the political elite and the people of South-South to be taught the ideals of complementarity of functions for development to thrive.
5. Necessary disciplinary measures within the bounds of law should be applied to checkmate the members of the political elite that fail to make inputs towards the development of the South-South.
6. Any political elite that is found to engage in elite deviance should be severely punished to deter others.
7. All agencies and commissions put in place, like the NDDC, Ministry of Niger Delta, Amnesty programme etc, to bring about the development of the South-South should be jealously guarded by the collective efforts of the people to deter elite deviance in their operations.
8. The political elite should be made to periodically make account of their stewardship to the people of the South-South to checkmate elite deviance.
9. Trained personal and officials should train and equip the local populace for development in the South-South.
10. The ruling elite in the South-South should be made to commend proactive communities by augmenting their developmental efforts with more projects that would attract other communities to engage in related development projects in the South-South.
11. There is the need to periodically publish what is given statutorily to the ruling political elite for the people to know how to hold them accountable.

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